

**Belmont Human Rights Commission  
Belmont Town Hall  
Mach 4, 2010**

**Members Present:** Lisa Bernt (presiding), Carl Brauer (taking notes), Julie Cicalese, Chuck Laverty, Paul Solomon, Laura Panos

**Members Absent:** Fran Yuan, Nan Donald, Connie Williams

**Liaisons Present:** Capt. Peter Hoerr (BPD), Kathryn Bonfiglio (BAR)

**Members of the Public:** John Vercellone

**Invited Guest:** Gloria Legvold

1. The Minutes of the February meeting were approved, with a clarifying amendment on paragraph 11 which Lisa will write.
2. Lisa will follow up with Fran as to who will be covering the phone line in coming months.
3. State law requires that each of our members complete an online ethics training program by April 2. Chuck reported on the ease of completing it.
4. Kathryn presented a statement on the Census that BAR had written and that the board had been sent by e-mail. She said that the wording was still being fine-tuned and she requested editorial suggestions. The Board unanimously approved the substance of the statement.
5. Laura is considering submitting an article to the Belmont Citizen-Herald on various issues regarding credit checks, which are requested on some employment applications.
6. Paul introduced Gloria Legvold, who is a board member of the Winchester Multicultural Network.

Gloria described the activities of her organization to which Sandy Thomson has devoted her life. It is now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year. Current activities include lectures, workshops, a newsletter, which has a mailing list of 1,200, advocacy and response to incidents. The Network's board is diverse in terms of race, religion, national origin, age and gender. Board members all serve on committees. A board term is one year but there has been relatively little turnover even though most of its members have full-time jobs. The Network relies on community advisers, including the police chief and the town manager, for expertise as the situation warrants.

Winchester does not have a human rights commission per se. The Winchester Multicultural Network in effect serves as a de facto human rights commission. The Winchester Board of Selectmen adopted a statement on human rights that had been

written by the Multicultural Network. She distributed the statement of September 24, 2009.

The Network, which receives no money from town government, has an annual budget of approximately \$23,000. The Network raises money through an annual solicitation letter and through grants. The Network has one half-day employee who works three days a week.

Paul asked Gloria what has not worked. Gloria said denial and passive resistance (“there are no problems in this town.”) In addition, people were reluctant to discuss issues of class. Winchester has a population of approximately 23,000. Ethnic groups in Winchester have tended to cluster in particular neighborhoods.

At the conclusion of her report, Gloria handed out samples of bread from a Winchester baker, a Senegalese immigrant. The board thanked her for coming to Belmont and for the bread. She left the meeting.

#### 7. Liaisons:

Peter Hoerr reported that last week a swastika was found in a bathroom stall at the high school. It was erased. The police department has received a citizen complaint that the department does racial profiling. Chief McLaughlin appointed Captain Hoerr to conduct an internal affairs investigation. He could not comment on it at this time.

Kathryn reported on efforts to lobby for level state funding of METCO.

The board discussed the relative merits of a completely independent group, such as the Winchester Multicultural Network, and of having a government-appointed group, such as exists in Belmont. At the start of the Belmont Human Rights Commission, Lisa observed, there was a debate within it as to whether it should even exist.